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PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TO: Alan Altur, U.S. EPA
FROM: Richard Walker, FIT
DATE: October 31, 1991
SUBJECT: *Paxton Avenue Lagoons, Chicago, Illinois*
ILD981960404/F05-9106-001/FIL0609PA

Paxton Avenue Lagoons, located in southeastern Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, is a site that at one time consisted of two lagoons, a berm of soil and crushed drums, and an area of oily soil. The site covers an area of approximately 15 acres and is located in a heavily industrialized area. It is bordered on the west by Land and Lakes Landfill #3, on the north and east by Paxton Landfill and on the south by 12th Street. Much of the area surrounding the site is used for waste disposal.

For many years, the site was allegedly used for nonpermitted disposal of waste oils and toxic and hazardous materials. The party responsible for the construction and operation of the site at that time is unknown. The site is located at the north end of a closed and covered landfill that operated from the 1940s to the 1960s. Allegedly, a wide variety of chemical wastes from nearby steel mills including pickling liquors and cutting oils were brought to the site.

In 1985, John Mathes and Associates, Inc., conducted a remedial investigation of the site and observed a release of organic vapor to air whiled collecting soil samples. In 1987, IEPA conducted a preliminary assessment investigation of the site. IEPA observed three open lagoons

with no access restriction and what appeared to IEPA to be surface water drainage toward Lake Calumet. Dead waterfowl were observed floating in the lagoons. During a June 1991 off-site reconnaissance inspection of the site, FIT observed an incinerator on-site and that the site was completely fenced.

Since 1989, Weston Services, Inc. (WSI), has been operating a transportable incineration system to dispose of on-site contaminated soil. No information is available on the extent to which these remedial activities have progressed.

The majority of the population within a 4-mile radius of the site obtains their drinking water from Lake Michigan. The nearest drinking water well is located approximately 2 miles from the site. Total estimated population using groundwater for drinking within a 4-mile radius of the site is 108 people.

The general stratigraphy of the Lake Calumet area consists of unconsolidated glacial deposits including pebbly till, silt, and gravel. Alluvial silts and sands along streams. Underlying the glacial deposits is the Silurian system, which consists of dolomite. Beneath that are Ordovician sequences which consist of layers of dolomite, sandstone, and shale.

The nearest surface water bodies to the site are the Calumet River and Lake Calumet, each less than 1/2 mile from the site. No overland migration route exists to Lake Calumet or the Calumet River because roadways and railroad tracks lie between the site and these surface water bodies. The Calumet River is a fishery and Lake Calumet if a fishery and a sensitive environment whose shores are a habitat for the Piping Plover and Wilson's Pharalope, two endangered species. There are no residences, schools, or day care facilities within 200 feet of the site.

Although a release of organic vapors was noted during soil sampling in 1985, it is believed that this was only caused by the disturbance of soils. A release is not anticipated under normal conditions.